

include everybody and everything. In fact, she mentions a few dozen novels altogether—no more. Anything which she considers not quite first class is either left out or just mentioned in passing. Peter Handke and Thomas Bernhard are left out because, as pointed out in the introduction, they are authors, “die vom heutigen Standpunkt noch nicht mit Sicherheit einzuordnen sind.”

Although Professor Emmel is herself a refugee from the GDR, her treatment of East-German authors is fair—at least with regard to the space allotted to them. Clearly, she has a better understanding of Brecht than of Christa Wolf or Hermann Kant. Erwin Strittmatter, Ehm Welk, Hans Marchwitza, Willi Bredel, and Stefan Heym are mentioned *en passant* only, but so are many known West-German authors.

Professor Emmel is a careful reader—and an honest one. She writes only about what she has read herself, and her analyses express her own considered opinion. One might argue that she overestimates certain authors; one, for instance, is Feuchtwanger. While about 20 (of 240) pages are allotted to him, Heimto von Doderer and Hanns Henny Jahn have less than 20 lines each, and Peter Bichsel or Adolf Muschg are not mentioned at all. As in her previous volumes, popular literature is ignored: there is no mention of the best sellers by Simmel, Habe, de Wohl, or those modern authors who hide their talents and their keen social criticism in crime novels of literary value—a unique phenomenon in recent German literature. But books in the series “Sammlung Dalp” are limited in length, and a choice had to be made. Also, the author had to keep in mind her public, mainly students of German literature, i.e. she had to adhere, more or less, to the generally accepted canon of the German novel. For all who want an introduction to the field, Professor Emmel’s “History of the German Novel” is a reliable, well-written, if somewhat conservative guide.

Ingrid Schuster

## *The Narratives of Michel Butor: The Writer as Janus.*

Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1978. Pp. 150.

Professor McWilliams’s premise that all of Butor’s work presents one unique theme, inherent from the earliest to the most recent, becomes plausible as we read his study of the total opus of the French writer. Suddenly works which may have appeared unconnected and crisscrossed by multiple hermetic trends become one cohesive whole dominated by one omnipresent theme: the search of modern Western man for his historical roots.

The study begins with an introduction intended to give the reader insight into Butor’s life and an understanding of the mythic structures inherent in his works. Some of these are: rites of passage, the quest of the hero, meandering through labyrinthine tasks, aborted Epiphanies, and ultimate sacrifice. The entire oeuvre is seen as a journey which often ends in frustration although the hope for personal and collective regeneration lies at the core of the ritual patterns.

There are ten individual chapters arranged in clear chronological order from *Passage de Milan* to the recent *Intervalle*. The earliest novel published in 1954 places the search theme in a vague Egyptian cultural background which colors the meanderings of the protagonists in their shallow Parisian lives. The next chapter deals with *L’Emploi du Temps* wherein Butor is seen as expanding his historical schema by unearthing an entire series of earlier civilizations buried in present day Manchester. The hero struggles toward a higher level of consciousness while we, the readers, join him in his archeological and psychological wanderings. In the chapter devoted to *La Modification* Butor is seen as denouncing an attempt at self-deception by a hero or anti-hero who would suppress part of his Roman heritage from his conscience. He is torn between his pagan aspirations and his bourgeois Catholic milieu. Janus, the god who oscillates between the forces of the past and the reevaluation of the future is introduced as he haunts Delmont’s nightmares and points the way toward a yet unforeseen course of action.

A remarkably concise study of *Degre's* constitutes the fourth chapter. McWilliams sees this novel as a broader historical portraiture wherein a pedagogue-hero seeks to reinterpret modern culture from the vantage point of Rabelais's Renaissance. Vernier is thought to flounder in his gigantic task due to the confusions inherent in our civilization. In Chapter V dealing with *Description de San Marco* and *Portrait d'artiste en jeune singe*, Butor himself is seen as journeying to a Bavaria beset by medieval and alchemical reminiscences, and haunted by contemporary nazi atrocities. In chapter VI, devoted to *Mobile*, the critic unveils Butor's motives as he transports his audience to a New-World setting. America for him is heir to Europe. It is presented as repressing with hysterical but vain efforts its natural past by denying all non-white influences. There is however hope for a utopian future which would liberate America's dark forces. This specific theme is expanded in the next chapter devoted to Butor's pilgrimage to Niagara Falls and eventually to the Southwest where the Zuni Indians embody for him the perfect relationship between man and nature. This descent into the past cannot be final, however. Primitive history must be studied so it may be understood and transcended.

In the ninth chapter devoted to *Intervalle*, Mr. McWilliams explains the paradox of a travel book in which no one moves. Although the evasion theme is restated, the only possible transformation is of one's consciousness. Butor is seen as subtly denouncing once again the religious and police restraints which gag our modern world. His orientation is towards the future. He considers literature (especially Fourier's) as a tool which can liberate us from latent Christian and capitalistic chains. Butor would even free us from Cartesian rationalism as he envisions literary happenings which are to unite all mankind in "superstacies" adorned with global poetry and pointing toward a utopic future. In his conclusion the critic announces a book yet to be published by Butor: *Boomerang*, which is set in yet another sector: Australia and the Pacific. Time is to become a function of space as Butor's view of the past is expressed in modernistic experiments which include temporal experiences, mythical resonances, and historical depth.

Although there is an ever growing volume of critical studies of the Butorian

oeuvre, Professor McWilliams's work stands unsurpassed because of its clarity, depth, and readable style. Here we indeed find the Ariadne thread to the entire opus of an author which can now be viewed as a well-organized poetic microcosm. The untutored reader or student puzzled by the often labyrinthine nature of structuralistic literature would gain instant enlightenment by reading this definitive interpretation of Butor's work.

Adèle Bloch

## JEANNETTE URBAS

*From Thirty Acres to Modern Times: The Story of French-Canadian Literature*

Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1976. Pp. 158.

Fashioned as an aid for the teaching and study of French-Canadian literature in translation, this reader's guide endeavors to trace the chronological development of central and representative themes in major prose works. As an outline in five parts ("Rural Myths and Fidelity to the Soil," "Urban Social Problems," "The Individual and Society," "Forms of Alienation," and "Modern Times: Keynote for Change"), *From Thirty Acres to Modern Times* performs a service of some value, providing a broad and coherent context for the study of many works of Canadian fiction composed in French. Beyond this general outline, however, the book does not offer much to the reader.

Professor Urbas's reading of novels rarely goes beyond stating what is already obvious to those who have read the works; she traffics in the facile. For example: of Lorenzo Surprenant in *Maria Chapdelaine*, we read that his name suggests surprises, then we are directed to a footnote informing us of the meaning of "surprenant" (p. 10); and of *Windflower*, that it is "a novel of social criticism. . . . In it Gabrielle Roy probes the significance of technological advances and considers the validity of modern life" (p. 57). While it is certain that a teacher should not make a